

Message Text

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PAGE 01 FLOREN 00038 270530Z
ACTION EUR-12

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UNCLAS FLORENCE 0038

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: POLICEMAN KILLED IN ULTRA-LEFT ESCAPE EFFORT IN
FLORENCE

1. AN ATTEMPT BY 4 MEN AND ONE WOMAN TO FREE 2 OR 3 LEFT
EXTREMISTS FROM FLORENCE CITY JAIL WENT AWRY AT NOON FRIDAY
JANUARY 21. THE ATTEMPT RESULTED IN THE MACHINE GUNNING
OF ONE POLICEMAN IN THE LEGS AND THE DEATH OF ANOTHER. A THIRD
POLICEMAN DRIVING THE CAR WAS UNHURT WHEN THE TIME GRENADE
TOSSED UNDER THE PATROL CAR FAILED TO EXPLODE.

2. THE ESCAPE EFFORT (SOPHISTICATED BY LOCAL STANDZARDS) BEGAN
AT 10:30 A.M. WHEN THE WOMAN AND 2 YOUTHS GAINED ENTRY INTO
THE APARTMENT OF A MURATE PRISON GUARD PRETENDING TO HAVE MAIL
TO DELIVER. THE APARTMENT IS A PART OF THE PRISON COMPLEX IN
CENTRAL FLORENCE. THE WOMAN, ONCE INSIDE, HELD A PISTOL ON THE
GUARD'S WIFE WHILE TWO MEN BEGAN SAWING THROUGH BARS ON A
COURTYARD WINDOW.

3. SIMULTANEOUSLY TWO INTENDED ESCAPEES INSIDE THE PRISON BEGAN
SAWING PRISON WINDOW BARS ACROSS THE COURTYARD. MEANWHILE
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OUTSIDE TWO OTHER YOUTHS ARMED WITH A MACHINE GUN, GRENADES,
A PISTOL AND A RIFLE EVIDENTLY LISTENING TO POLICE BROADCASTS
STOOD LOOKOUT WITH A STOLEN VAN. APPARENTLY BY CHANCE SOMEONE
NOTICED THE VAN, STOLEN A DAY OR SO PREVIOUSLY FROM THE
NEIGHBORHOOD, AND CALLED THE POLICE WHO DISPATCHED THE THREE
OFFICERS OF PUBLIC SECURITY WHO WERE AMBUSHED.

4. THE TWO ON THE STREET OPENED FIRE IMMEDIATELY AND THREW A GRENADE UNDER THE CAR THEN FLED IN A SEDAN LEAVING THE SUB-MACHINEGUN AND OTHER ITEMS. THE SHOTS APPARENTLY WARNED THEIR ACCOMPLICES INSIDE WHO FORCED THE WIFE INTO A TOILET AND ESCAPED ALSO LEAVING MUCH PARAPHERNALIA. THE WIFE SCREAMED TO HER HUSBAND ON DUTY ACROSS THE COURTYARD. HE IN TURN SOUNDED THE ALERT IN THE PRISON WHICH PRECIPITATED A SEARCH RESULTING IN THE DISCOVERY OF THE TWO INMATES SAWING ON THE BARS APPARENTLY UNAWARE OF EVENTS OUTSIDE. THERE MAY BE A THIRD INMATE INVOLVED WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO WATCH FOR INTRUDERS.

5. AUTHORITIES HAVE LAUNCHED A MAJOR INVESTIGATION WHICH BY SATURDAY HAD RESULTED IN THE IDENTIFICATION OF ONE OF THE CULPRITS, A 32 YEAR OLD LIVORNO MECHANIC WANTED FOR AN OCTOBER KIDNAP ATTEMPT WHO HAS AT LEAST TWICE SLIPPED THROUGH POLICE HANDS.

6. AT THE INSTIGATION OF THE TRABE UNIONS, FLORENCE CLOSED DOWN AT 4:00 P.M. ON MONDAY JANUARY 23 FOR THE FUNERAL OF THE SLAIN OFFICER AMID A FLOOD OF CONDOLENCES. (IN AN INTERESTING SIDELIGHT, CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES PRESIDENT INGRAO (PCI), VISITING FLORENCE FOR A JOINT PSI/PCI CITY GOVERNMENT SPONSORED INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FREEDOM IN CHILE CALLED ON THE WOUNDED OFFICER AND INFORMED HIM OF HIS IMMEDIATE PROMOTION AWARDED BY INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA.)

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7. AUTHORITIES SAY THEY EXPECT THEIR MANY CLUES WILL LEAD TO CAPTURE OF ALL THOSE INVOLVED. THE AUDACITY, SOPHISTICATION AND THE DEATH HAVE PROVOKED ANGER, ALARM, ANXIETY AND MANY QUESTION, INCLUDING HOW WAS IT POSSIBLE FOR THE PRISONERS TO WORK ONE AND A HALF HOURS UNINTERRUPTED. HOW WERE THE ESCAPE SUPPLIES SMUGGLED INTO THE PRISON? HOW DID THE ATTACKERS KNOW THE LAYOUT SO WELL?

8. ONE OF THE PRISONERS RENATO BRANDOLI WAS ARRESTED APRIL 1977 IN CONNECTION WITH A RAID IN FLORENCE ON A HIDEOUT OF THE "UNITA COMBATTENTI COMMUNIST" IN WHICH MANY ARMS, AMMUNITION AND EXPLOSIVES WERE SEIZED. COMMENT: THE EPISODE APPEARS TO HAVE EXPOSED MANY INTERCONNECTIONS AMONG LEFT EXTREMIST GROUPS IN THE FLORENCE AREA PRESENTING A PICTURE, ALBEIT DIMLY, OF A MORE EXTENSIVE AND DEVELOPED NETWORK THAN PREVIOUSLY IMAGINED. THIS HAS CREATED A DISQUIET NEW TO FLORENCE WHICH HAD BEEN THOUGHT BY ALL TO BE AN ISLAND FREE OF EVEN THE POTENTIAL FOR THIS KIND OF VIOLENCE. (AN EXPLODING MOLOTOV COCKTAIL EVERY FORTNIGHT OR SO HAS COME TO BE ACCEPTED AS NORMAL EXCEPT BY THE DC WHICH HAS USUALLY BEEN THE VICTIM.)
GORDON

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